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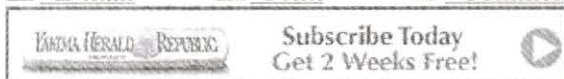
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EPA demands Toppenish gas station clean up spill

by Phil Ferolito
Yakima Herald-Republic

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TOPPENISH -- A fueling station near downtown Toppenish has been ordered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up a petroleum spill.

The station at the corner of East Toppenish and Asotin avenues near downtown had three underground tanks removed in November 2009, and two other tanks were discovered and removed.

During excavation to remove the 40-year-old tanks, contaminated soil was found and roughly 1,500 tons were removed. Water was also struck and digging stopped, according to an EPA news release.

One of the tanks had oil sludge in it, and oil could be seen floating in the groundwater. Nearby residents use groundwater as their main source of water, the release said.

Toppenish is on the Yakama reservation, which is under EPA authority.

The gas station, formerly known as Spirit, was last operating as a Smitty's Conoco under the ownership of R.H. Smith Distributing Company Inc. The company has entered an agreement with EPA to clean up the spill, devise a plan to address groundwater contamination and set a strict schedule for cleanup that includes up to \$10,000 per day in fines if it fails to meet the order, the release said.

Petroleum leaks can percolate into groundwater, contaminate drinking water and increase the risk of cancer and other health problems.

For more information about leaking underground storage tanks, visit www.epa.gov/r10earth/ust.htm



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